



"Conserving Wildlife –
Serving People"

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Green River Region

Angler Newsletter

Spring, 2005



Greetings Sportsmen!

Welcome to the second annual issue of the Green River Region Angler Newsletter. This newsletter is released each spring and is intended to inform anglers about aquatic resource issues in the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Green River Fisheries Region. This area covers all the rivers, lakes, and reservoirs in the lower Green River drainage downstream from (and including) Fontenelle Reservoir and the upper portions of the Little Snake River and Bear River drainages. We have three fisheries biologists and one aquatic habitat biologist responsible for managing the fish communities and their habitats in the Green River Region. Many of you may not know that the Game and Fish Department is responsible for the management of over 600 different wildlife species in the great state of Wyoming. Therefore, the Fish Division is not only responsible for sport fish, but also native non-game species and the most important element, their habitats. Our mission statement (opposite column), developed from mandated state statute, reflects that philosophy.

Fisheries management personnel are responsible for inventorying and monitoring fish populations, providing input for the protection and conservation of all aquatic species and habitat, and specific management of fish populations through fish stocking recommendations, fishing regulation proposals, and

fish population and habitat restoration. The aquatic habitat biologist's mission is to restore and manage habitat to enhance and sustain wildlife populations in the future. We do our best to monitor/enhance fish populations and habitat, but only get to a small fraction of the fisheries each year. Therefore in addition to our scientific sampling data, we rely on information obtained from anglers and landowners to manage the fisheries in southwest Wyoming. We manage aquatic resources for you, the people of Wyoming, so your input is very important. We would appreciate any comments about the contents of this newsletter or any other fisheries concerns you may have. Please contact us using the information provided on the last page of the newsletter.

Fish Division Mission Statement

"As stewards of Wyoming's aquatic resources, we are committed to conservation and enhancement of all aquatic wildlife and their habitats for future generations through scientific resource management and informed public participation. We will use an integrated program of protection, regulation, propagation, restoration and control to provide diverse, quality fisheries resources and angling opportunities. Our efforts will balance the productive capacity of habitats with public desires."

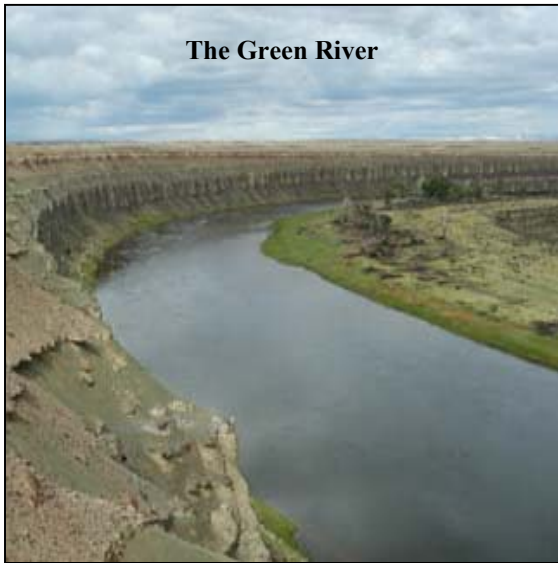
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Drought and Green River Trout

Drought has been a major topic of concern in recent years. Fish face many problems during prolonged periods of drought, including warmer water temperatures, less space to live, and decreased food availability. As stream flows decrease or reservoir levels drop, fish have to compete harder for limited resources and their growth usually suffers. When water temperatures warm, fish (particularly trout) become stressed and susceptible to diseases.



The Green River

The Green River trout fishery is showing the impacts of the recent drought. Prior to last winter, low flows significantly reduced winter habitat for trout. The main channel habitat in the Green River lacks diversity and suitable winter habitat. Side channel and backwater habitats are important to trout during the winter, particularly juveniles, because these areas provide low-velocity refuges and protection from large predators that are confined to the main channel. The low winter flows between 2001 and 2003 reduced side channel and backwater habitat availability and caused increased winter mortality, especially for juvenile rainbow and Snake River cutthroat trout.

The low flows have also resulted in substantial sediment deposition in the river. Silt has accumulated over much of the stream bottom and while this makes wading challenging, it is even more harmful to the survival of trout. Silt negatively affects the reproduction of wild brown trout and kokanee salmon populations. If provided adequate

flows and spawning substrate these fish are capable of maintaining strong numbers through natural reproduction. When silt blankets spawning gravels, eggs suffocate before they hatch and trout don't reproduce successfully. Silt also fills the spaces between rocks and gravel, decreasing the available surface area for macro-invertebrates (the bugs trout eat) and leading to an overall decline in bug production.

We manage the Green River trout fishery for wild brown trout, stocked rainbow trout, and stocked Snake River cutthroat trout. The fish population is sampled using electrofishing gear in April each year. This allows us to determine the population structure and abundance of trout as well as the survival of our hatchery stocks. The Fontenelle Dam section of the Green River was sampled in April 2004. Fisheries management activities in the 1990's focused on the Seedskaadee and Town sections of the Green River so the Fontenelle Dam reach had not been sampled since 1989.

Trout abundance in this section was greater in 2004 compared to 1989. Abundance of all trout was 310 fish/mile, compared to 252 fish/mile in 1989. The 2004 population was dominated by brown trout, which comprised 66% of all trout sampled. The estimated abundance of brown trout was 205 fish/mile, a 155% increase compared to 132 fish/mile in 1989. Rainbow trout comprised approximately 30% of the trout population with an estimated abundance of 94 fish/mile, slightly lower (86%) compared to the 1989 abundance estimate of 110 fish/mile, but the average size of rainbows greatly increased in 2004. Snake River cutthroat and Bear River cutthroat trout represented only 3% and 1%, respectively, of all trout sampled. Due to the low numbers captured, cutthroat trout population estimates could not be generated.

One possible explanation for low cutthroat catch rates is that they have been stocked in side channels since 1997. This strategy is intended to minimize predation and increase survival by utilizing the protected habitats provided by side channels. The stocked cutthroat may have still been occupying side channel and backwater habitats in the spring when sampling was conducted and



Aquatic Habitat Biologist Kevin Spence with a 9 lb Green River brown trout.

therefore were not effectively recruited into the sample because electrofishing efforts were confined to the main channel.

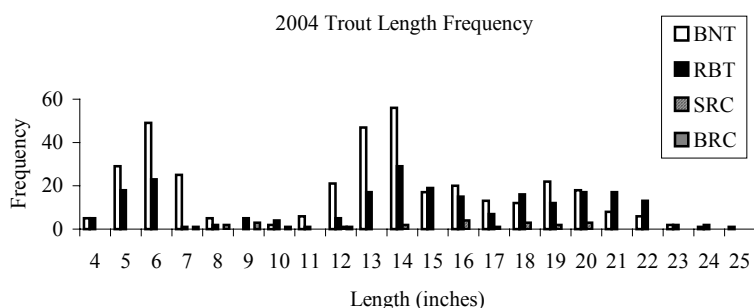
Table 1. Trout data from the Fontenelle Dam section of the Green River in 2004.

Species	Number caught	Average length (in)	Length range (in)	Average weight (lbs)
Brown trout	365	13.0	4.3 – 25.2	1.36
Rainbow trout	230	14.7	4.0 – 24.4	2.12
Bear River cutthroat trout	8	9.4	7.2 – 12.5	0.30
Snake River cutthroat trout	16	17.5	12.1 – 20.5	2.57
Lake trout	1	20.6	NA	2.64

Trout length frequency indicated that four age classes were represented in the sample. Brown trout dominated the juvenile portion of the population but the abundance of all trout between 8.0 and 12.0 inches (representing large juveniles) was very low. The low abundance of this group may reflect a poor year class or insufficient habitat for this size class. Among trout ≥ 15 inches, the abundance of brown trout and rainbow trout was similar.



Fisheries Biologist Craig Amadio with a 7 lb Snake River cutthroat captured in the Fontenelle Dam section of the Green River.



Although the overall abundance of trout was greater in 2004 compared to 1989, several factors are likely suppressing populations in the Green River. Low winter flows in recent years have likely been a major factor limiting trout numbers. Between 1995 and 2001, average winter discharge from Fontenelle Dam was approximately 1,200 cubic feet/second (cfs). During the 2001-2002 winter, average discharge downstream from Fontenelle Dam was only 450 cfs. Average winter flow slightly improved in 2002-2003 to 650 cfs, but was still below

normal. These low winter flows have likely reduced winter habitat availability, particularly for juvenile trout, leading to increased winter mortality. Past studies have concluded that winter flow patterns may be a major factor limiting trout populations in the Green River and flows less than 800 cfs likely have a negative affect on trout populations and enhance the production of non-trout species. Fortunately, flows substantially improved and were maintained over 1,100 cfs during the 2004-2005 winter. If this trend continues, the survival of juvenile trout should improve.

The Green River also desperately needs a flushing flow to prevent further declines in the fishery. The river has not had a flushing flow since 1999 and sediment deposition has become a major problem. Flushing flows are important because they clean the silt off gravel substrates, which ultimately improves natural reproduction success for trout and increases the production of invertebrates.

The Green River trout fishery is largely at the mercy of Mother Nature and future precipitation, but make no mistake, the Green is definitely worth fishing. Throwing streamers, nymphs, rapalas, spoons, or spinners can turn up some memorable trout and most anglers enjoy the relative solitude of the river.



Estimating Trout Populations

There are various ways to estimate the total number of fish in a section of river, but the most common method used in Wyoming involves the use of electricity. To employ this method, known as electrofishing, a generator is used to produce an alternating current (AC), which is then converted to direct current (DC) by an electronic device that is specially designed for electrofishing. The gear also allows the current to be modified in other ways to optimize our ability to catch fish. After the current is converted to the form needed, it is passed through the water.

The electricity causes fish to involuntarily swim toward the point where the current is entering the water (the anode), and they temporarily lose their ability to move when they get close to the anode. At this stage, they are easy to catch with a dip net. Stunned fish are removed from the current and placed

in a tub of water that is insulated from the electricity; recovery from the effects of being shocked occurs quickly. Fish are then weighed and measured, which gives us a good picture of the size structure and general condition of the population. Finally, the fish are marked (usually by removing a small piece of one fin) before being released into the water. The mark is

needed to calculate an estimate of the number of fish in the population. Each section of river has to be sampled several times in order to make a population estimate, and the marks are used to determine if an individual fish was captured previously. The number of marked and unmarked fish collected during each sampling event is then

entered into a mathematical formula that calculates an estimate of the total number of fish in the area.

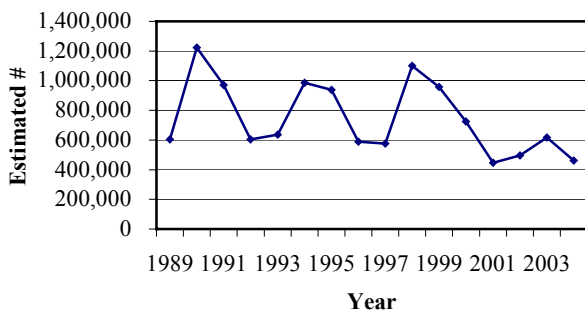


Trout population survey with raft electrofishing gear.

Flaming Gorge Update

Kokanee fishing will be slow again in 2005, but should be slightly better than anglers have experienced the past few years. Population estimates for age-0, age-1 and age-2 kokanee (1.4 to 13.8 inches) show the population has decreased, even with relatively stable reservoir levels during the past 4 years. Kokanee populations are cyclical, meaning they exhibit a natural cycle of high and low abundance fluctuations. This cycle usually occurs over the course of 4-5 years. The low point of the recent cycle of young kokanee occurred in 2001. Kokanee numbers have slightly increased since then, but the 2004 estimate was still

low (lower than the previous two low points in the kokanee cycle, which occurred in 1992 and 1996).



Estimated abundance of age-0, age-1, and age-2 kokanee in Flaming Gorge from 1989 to 2004.



Ron Carey with a couple nice Flaming Gorge kokanee.

This is not good news for the future of kokanee in Flaming Gorge. Should the 4 year cycle repeat itself, the kokanee population could be in serious jeopardy.

Hopefully, with help from anglers, the population will stabilize and once again return to high levels in the near future.

What can kokanee anglers do to help manage this valuable sport fish? No studies have been conducted examining hooking and handling mortality (estimating how many fish die after the fish are released), but the mortality rate is likely high for kokanee. In order to reduce mortality of released kokanee, keep the fish in the water and use pliers to free the hook. This reduces both thermal and handling stress on the fish. When anglers remove kokanee from the water and handle them it significantly increases post-release mortality rates because kokanee are very sensitive to warm temperatures and scale loss caused by handling. Another thing anglers can do is keep all the fish you catch and once the daily limit is reached stop fishing for kokanee and target lake trout, rainbow trout, brown trout or smallmouth bass.



Kevin Spence with a nice catch and release brown trout from Flaming Gorge Reservoir.

During late summer, one of the common methods used to fish for kokanee is finding a school of adult fish and jigging for them. Anglers not only foul hook many fish by doing this, but they also tend to release more fish. It is hard to estimate how many kokanee are lost each year to hooking and handling mortality, but fewer fish lost will equate to more fish on the spawning grounds in the fall and increased recruitment of kokanee the following spring. The old saying “limit your catch and limit your kill” best describes the action Flaming Gorge kokanee anglers need to take to help manage their kokanee fishery.

On the other hand, the number of lake trout in the reservoir has increased significantly during the past decade. According to recent gill net sampling the numbers of small lake trout (less than 25 inches) are the highest since the netting program began in 1990. The reasons for the increase appear to be related to a dramatic increase in spawning success. The increasing lake trout population has created very good fishing, but also more predation on kokanee.



A fisheries biologist collects lake trout length and weight data at Flaming Gorge.



In order to bring kokanee and lake trout populations back into balance, anglers need to harvest lake trout. Lake trout regulations were liberalized in 2004, allowing each angler to keep up to 6 fish (only one ≥ 28 inches), and more regulation changes are being proposed for next year (see the story on pg 11 regarding proposed regulation changes for 2006). Ice anglers took advantage of the regulation this year and did their part in helping to manage lake trout by keeping limits of these smaller fish. In fact, Flaming Gorge ice anglers experienced some of the best lake trout fishing in many years. Now it is up to the boat anglers to do their part. It is imperative that anglers harvest enough fish in 2005 to reduce lake trout numbers, especially fish less than 28 inches. If these year classes of small lake trout grow large enough to where they eat only fish, the reservoir's kokanee population will be in trouble. This is not only bad for kokanee, but lake trout as well. The loss of kokanee, the key forage fish for lake trout, will ultimately lead to declines in the lake trout population. The lake trout will become thin, exhibiting very poor body condition and girth. Anglers may recall the last low in the kokanee cycle and remember how skinny the big fish were back then when lake trout measuring 36 inches didn't even weigh 20 pounds! All anglers, including those who consider themselves trophy lake trout fishermen, need to help manage the fishery by keeping small fish. The future of your lake trout and kokanee fishery depends on your willingness to help us harvest as many small lake trout as possible in 2005.

Jim Bridger Chemical Treatment

The Wyoming Game & Fish Department chemically treated the Jim Bridger Surge Pond in September 2005 to remove walleye, white suckers, and carp. Game and Fish personnel applied rotenone, a chemical that is toxic to gilled animals such as fish but is not harmful to humans, livestock or other wildlife at the concentrations used to kill fish.

The decision to conduct chemical treatments is not one that G&F personnel take lightly. Chemical treatments are a last resort when no other strategy will work. Chemical treatments are unpleasant, expensive, time consuming and labor intensive but are sometimes necessary to protect or restart broken fish populations. There is also the short time loss of angling opportunity, something the Department takes very seriously. Chemical treatments are necessary and important management tool nonetheless.

This decision was made following the discovery, in October 2003 that walleye had successfully reproduced in Jim Bridger pond. The presence of walleye was a concern because of the proximity of the surge pond to the Green River drainage and especially Flaming Gorge Reservoir. It was not just that the Department was concerned about walleye escaping the pond and traveling down Bitter Creek to Flaming Gorge Reservoir. We were also concerned that some "selfish individual" would illegally transplant walleye from the pond to Flaming Gorge Reservoir (see story on Sulphur Creek Reservoir). If walleye became established in Flaming Gorge Reservoir they would not only negatively impact the kokanee and lake trout populations, but also the other sport fish including rainbow trout, brown trout and smallmouth bass.

Walleye gained access to the surge pond in 1998 as 2-inch fingerling with a group of smallmouth bass. The Game and Fish stocked the bass as a biological control on juvenile white suckers in the pond. Unbeknownst to Game and Fish personnel, a few walleye were hiding among the 80,000 half-inch bass that were

stocked. Initially Department biologists hoped the walleye would die out without reproducing, but in October 2003, two 6-inch walleye were netted during routine sampling, confirming successful reproduction.

White suckers and common carp are believed to have gained access to the pond via the pipeline that supplies

water from the Green River. The suckers are a problem because they compete with trout for the available food resources. When trout and suckers exist in the same water body, the growth and survival of trout is negatively impacted. Carp are a problem because their feeding habits tend to muddy the water. Carp root in the bottom sediments for

insects and crayfish. This activity suspends the sediments in the water column thereby reducing the ponds ability to produce trout food, such as zooplankton and invertebrates.



Fisheries biologist's applying rotenone to Jim Bridger Pond.



**The chemical treatment targeted these 3 species.
(top to bottom: white sucker, common carp, walleye)**

The crayfish population survived the treatment with little mortality. Trapping conducted 15 days following the treatment confirmed large numbers of crayfish were alive and healthy in the pond. The concentration of Rotenone used to kill the fish in the pond was not lethal to crayfish, which remain safe to eat.

In the future, Jim Bridger Pond will be managed as a “put-grow-and-take” fishery through annual stocking of 4,000 catchable rainbow trout and 750 Snake River cutthroat brood culls. The pond will also be stocked with smallmouth bass and splake as a biological control for white suckers. Beginning this summer, the Department will transplant 1,000 smallmouth bass annually for three years from Flaming Gorge Reservoir. The transplanted smallmouth bass should establish a naturally reproducing population.

In late May 4,000 catchable size (8 inch) rainbow trout will be stocked in the pond. Shortly following that 750 Snake River cutthroat brood culls (1 to 3 pounds), will be stocked. Fishing will be good this summer as the fish grow in the productive water without competition from white suckers and carp. In time fishing will be very good as we get several year classes of trout built up in the reservoir. Although the treatment was an inconvenience the fishing future at Jim Bridger Pond is very bright

Walleye Found in Sulphur Creek Reservoir Another Illegal Introduction

Sulphur Creek Reservoir (south of Evanston) was gill netted in early June 2004 to monitor the trout population. In addition to the trout nets, two extra nets



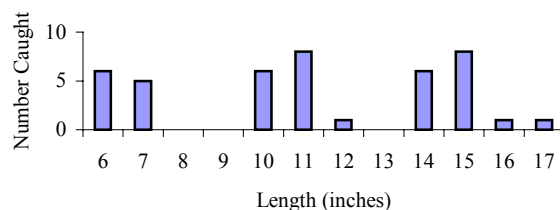
were set along the face of the dam in an exploratory effort to capture smallmouth bass that were illegally introduced to the reservoir and first documented in 2000. No smallmouth bass were caught in the exploratory nets, but 3 walleye were captured. The discovery of walleye marked the first instance that they have been documented in Sulphur Creek Reservoir. The presence of walleye in the system likely resulted from an illegal

introduction that may have occurred during the time period when smallmouth bass were introduced.

Green River fisheries management personnel sampled the reservoir again in late June to assess the status of the walleye population and discovered that walleye appear to be thriving and reproducing in Sulphur Creek Reservoir. A total of 39 walleye were captured, ranging in length from 6.6 to 17.1 inches with an average of 11.9 inches. The walleye exhibited outstanding body condition and walleye length structure indicated that the population currently consists of at least three different age classes,

including juveniles (see picture and graph). Therefore, walleye have likely been present in the reservoir for a number of years and it appears that successful natural reproduction has already occurred.

**Sulphur Creek Reservoir Walleye Length
Frequency (n=42)**



This is really bad news. The presence of walleye will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the trout fishery in Sulphur Creek Reservoir. Walleye are aggressive predators and will not have enough food in the reservoir to support a reproducing population. As a result they will prey on rainbow and Bear River cutthroat trout. The trout fishery is currently maintained through stocking, but stocking rates will be insufficient to support the fishery in the face of walleye predation. Ultimately the trout will disappear and trout anglers will be the ones who suffer thanks to the selfish individual who introduced walleye to the reservoir without understanding the consequences.

In addition to creating local fishery problems, the introduction of walleye to the Bear River system may also have disastrous consequences for downstream fish communities. Walleye will likely escape the reservoir and establish populations in other waters within the drainage like Woodruff Reservoir or Bear Lake.

Live Fish Transportation and Illegal Introductions

Due to the significant threat illegal introductions pose to our fisheries, the transportation of live fish is considered a serious wildlife crime. The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission Regulations, Chapter 46, Section 12 specifies, "No person shall transport live fish or live fish eggs from the water of capture except as provided by Commission regulations or as authorized by the Department." This includes use and dumping of illegal live bait and transport of any live fish away from the water in a live well.

Fish managers carefully plan introductions of non-native fishes to enhance angling opportunities in appropriate waters. The introduction of a new species can severely impact local fish communities and ecosystems. Introduced species compete with existing populations and ultimately change the fish assemblage. They can also carry and spread diseases or parasites. In certain situations, they may hybridize with established fish resulting in a loss of genetic purity. Often these changes to the fishery have disastrous consequences.

Take Flaming Gorge for example. I have heard a number of anglers express their desire for walleye in Flaming Gorge. While this may sound like a good idea (I enjoy fishing for walleye as much as anyone), the effect it would have on the existing fishery would be devastating.



The reservoir does not have enough food to support both lake trout and walleye. Kokanee are not only a popular sport fish, they are the main food supply for lake trout in the reservoir. If walleye were introduced they would consume a substantial portion of the kokanee population. Eventually the kokanee would disappear because there are not enough to support both predators. Once the kokanee disappeared, the lake trout population would collapse. Walleye would also key in on stocked rainbow trout, brown trout, and smallmouth bass for food and these sport fish populations would eventually decline. Once walleye had eaten themselves out of house and home so to speak, their population would collapse as well.

Ultimately the angler suffers as the fishery quality declines. Flaming Gorge is a phenomenal lake trout fishery, one of the best anywhere. It also supports



Fisheries Biologist Bill Wengert displays a 30 lb lake trout from Flaming Gorge Reservoir.

good populations of kokanee, rainbow trout, and smallmouth bass. In fact Flaming Gorge is home of the state record for lake trout, brown trout, smallmouth bass, and most recently channel catfish. It is a unique resource that provides plenty of quality fishing opportunities. We can't mess that up with the introduction of a species that the reservoir cannot support!

Illegal fish introductions, accidental or intentional, can devastate fisheries both where they are introduced and downstream. For the angler, this can result in fewer fishing opportunities. In addition, illegal fish introductions increase management costs (most people don't think about this aspect). This ultimately costs the sportsman because money was spent on damage control rather than improvements to the fishery.

Unfortunately, some of the waters in the Green River Basin have already been impacted by illegal fish introductions. In addition to walleye and smallmouth bass in Sulphur Creek Reservoir, burbot (ling) were recently illegally introduced to Big Sandy Reservoir.

Burbot



From the reservoir, they rapidly spread downstream to the Green River and Flaming Gorge. Burbot are aggressive predators and will certainly impact local fish populations. The true outcome of this introduction will not be known for years, but it will likely have a negative effect on trout populations.

Illegal introductions have occurred in many other river basins throughout the state. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is increasing enforcement of the laws

concerning transportation and introduction of fish to new waters. The easiest way to avoid trouble is to make sure all of the fish you keep are dead before leaving the water you caught them in and do not transport any live fish from one body of water to another for any reason. We all share a responsibility to conserve our fisheries and anyone who witnesses unlawful actions should report them to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department at (307) 777-4600.

Additional Threats to Fish – Aquatic Nuisance Species

Every water body is a unique ecological system. A particular fish, aquatic plant, or other aquatic life form that belongs in one stream or lake may not belong in another. When a new organism arrives it may upset the delicate balance of the system, causing ecological or economic harm, thus the invading species is considered a nuisance. The parasite that causes whirling disease and New Zealand mud snail are good examples of nuisance species that can invade watersheds and reduce the quality of Wyoming fisheries.

Whirling Disease

Whirling disease primarily affects trout and salmon and is mainly spread by humans when the spores attach to waders or angling gear. A microscopic parasite known as *Myxobolus cerebralis* attacks the cartilage in the head and spine of young fish. Sufficiently infected young fish may display uncontrolled swimming behavior, develop a black tail, or die. Survivors may have skeletal deformities. The parasite is also suspected of affecting young fish in other ways, such as making them less able to escape predation and feed normally. The long-term effects of this disease on wild trout populations is not completely understood.



Rainbow trout infected with whirling disease.

New Zealand Mudsnail

New Zealand mudsnails are native to fresh waters of New Zealand. They were first discovered in North America during the late 1980s in the Snake River, Idaho and Madison River, Montana. Since then, this small snail has quickly spread to other western drainages including waters in Yellowstone National Park. New Zealand mudsnails are primarily spread by humans when they attach to waders or angling gear. They range in size from a grain of sand to an average size of 1/8th inch. They out-compete and replace native snails and invertebrates, which are the main food sources for many fish including trout. They reproduce rapidly, often reaching densities of over 45,000 per square foot, and they have no natural predators (fish cannot eat them). The New Zealand mudsnail is a very serious threat to aquatic ecosystems and fish populations in North America. A University of Wyoming professor studying New Zealand mudsnails once said, "They don't become part of the ecosystem – they become the ecosystem".



New Zealand mudsnail

What you can do to prevent the spread of aquatic nuisance species

- ◆ Clean all equipment such as boats, trailers, waders, boots and float tubes of mud and vegetation before leaving the water.
- ◆ Do not transport any river or lake water in coolers, buckets, boats, or live wells from one river basin to another.

- ◆ Do not transport live fish between bodies of water. This practice could spread aquatic nuisance species and is strictly illegal.
- ◆ Do not dispose of fish heads, skeletons or entrails in any body of water.
- ◆ If you observe symptoms of whirling disease in fish or illegal fish transportation and stocking, contact your local Game and Fish office.

Colorado River Cutthroat Trout Restoration

I'm sure many people are aware of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's ongoing efforts to restore Colorado River cutthroat trout populations. Some ask why we need to replace rainbow or brook trout populations with native cutthroat. As fisheries biologists, we are not only responsible for managing sport fisheries. We are also responsible for managing the aquatic resources from a watershed perspective to maintain ecosystem function and integrity. Colorado River cutthroat trout are native to the Green River watershed and play an important ecological role in healthy fish communities. It is our responsibility to preserve the health and diversity of aquatic systems by managing for native species whenever possible.



Good Colorado River cutthroat trout habitat in Trout Creek on Little Mountain.

Rainbow and brook trout are more aggressive and often out compete cutthroat for resources in areas where they occur together. This normally leads to the suppression or disappearance of the cutthroat population. Therefore if cutthroats are to be restored in a drainage, other trout sometimes need to be removed.

Fortunately, we have the best of both worlds with Colorado River cutthroat trout. Not only are they an important native species, they are also a wonderful sport fish. They survive well and can grow relatively

large. Cutthroat are also rather gullible which makes them easy and fun to catch. Depending on the water



Colorado River cutthroat trout from Carrant Creek.

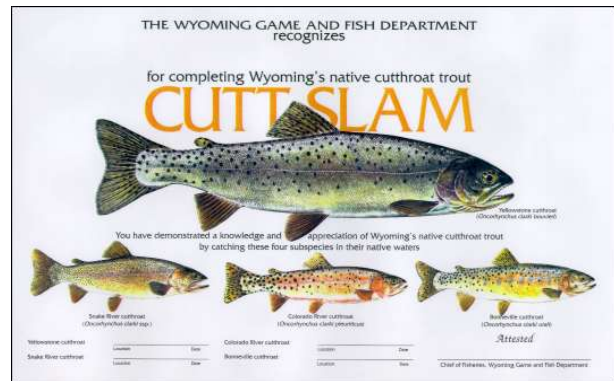
they inhabit they can be pursued with bait, flies or lures. Always check your regulations to see if a special regulation applies to the water you intend to fish.

Another reason Colorado River cutthroat trout are so important is that they are part of Wyoming's heritage. Cutthroat trout are the only trout native to this great state and were likely important to western settlers and Native Americans. They became established here for a reason, because this is where they evolved and thrive. Cutthroat trout have a lot of intrinsic value and we must ensure that strong populations are passed on to future generations.

Most sub-species of cutthroat trout are rapidly declining across their native range due to habitat loss, competition with other trout species, and hybridization. In fact, Colorado River cutthroat trout have been petitioned for listing as a federally endangered species. So far those petitions have been denied and they are not yet considered an endangered species, largely due to the work Wyoming and other western states have done to preserve existing populations and restore this native trout to drainages where they had been replaced by non-native fish. Wyoming's wildlife should remain under the control of the people who reside in our state and Colorado River cutthroat trout restoration efforts are helping to assure that.

Cutt-Slam Program

The Cutt-Slam is a program developed by the late Ron Remmick, past Green River fisheries supervisor for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Ron was an extraordinary biologist. He was deeply dedicated to protecting and preserving Wyoming's aquatic resources and had a passion for our native cutthroat trout. His program is designed to encourage anglers to learn more about Wyoming's cutthroat sub-species and develop more understanding and appreciation of the Department's cutthroat management program. The Cutt-Slam has become very popular and is a wonderful way to educate young anglers about our native cutthroat trout.



To complete the Cutt-Slam, anglers must catch and photograph Wyoming's four cutthroat trout sub-species (Yellowstone, Snake River, Colorado River, and Bonneville) in their native range. The photos are then presented to a Wyoming Game and Fish Department fisheries biologist for species verification, along with date and location information. There is no cost or time limit to complete the "Slam". The Department keeps records for anglers of each entry and once all four sub-species have been caught and verified, we send each participant a color certificate (pictured above) featuring all four sub-species recognizing your accomplishment.

Proposed Regulation Changes for 2006

A number of fishing regulation changes in the Green River Region have been proposed for 2006. The biggest changes (listed below) are for Flaming Gorge Reservoir and the Green River. There are also other proposed changes anglers should take note of both at the regional and statewide level. All the proposed fishing regulation changes can be reviewed on the Department's website.

Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Sweetwater County.

The aggregate creel limit on trout and salmon (excluding lake trout) shall be 4 (four) fish per day or in possession.

No more than 3 (three) of these fish shall be kokanee salmon.

The creel limit on lake trout shall be 8 (eight) fish per day or in possession.

Only 1 (one) lake trout may exceed 28 inches.

The creel limit on bass shall be ten (10) per day or in possession. (existing will not change)

All kokanee salmon caught from September 10 through November 30 shall be released to the water immediately.

Rationale: Decreasing the limit on trout and salmon to four fish is needed to preserve the quality of the rainbow trout (RBT) fishery. Currently Jones Hole National Fish Hatchery raises 450,000 catchable RBT to stock into the reservoir. The number of RBT stocked by Jones Hole will decrease to 400,000 in order for Jones Hole to rear 500,000 kokanee for Flaming Gorge Reservoir. Additionally, decreasing the trout – salmon limit will place more angling pressure on the small lake trout. Netting data shows the numbers of small lake trout have increased significantly. Separating lake trout harvest regulations from the trout – salmon regulation should increase the harvest of small lake trout from the reservoir, which will also decrease predation on kokanee. We are also proposing to extend the kokanee closure on Flaming Gorge Reservoir in order to increase the numbers of adult salmon that have an opportunity to spawn each year. Creel data shows 10% of the kokanee harvest occurs between



September 10 and October 1 and nearly all of the harvested during this time period are adult fish, which would spawn in October and November. Extending the closure on kokanee fishing, based upon creel survey information and previous research on kokanee, will decrease harvest and protect spawning kokanee. September 10 will always fall after the Labor Day weekend, so this regulation will not affect this important holiday weekend. kokanee spawning is nearly complete by the end of November, affording full protection during the spawning season.

Green River from Fontenelle Dam downstream approximately one (1) mile to the U.S. Geological Survey gauge station (cable crossing) at the Weeping Rock Campground in Sweetwater County.

Closed to fishing from 1-October through December 31.

Rationale: The proposal is to extend the current closure on the Green River from Fontenelle Dam to the cable crossing (approximately one mile). Late run kokanee salmon run the Green River and gather in the reach downstream from Fontenelle Dam to spawn. The current closure protects the spawning fish but does not protect the eggs deposited in the gravel by the spawning fish. A salmon egg is very fragile and will die if disturbed during early stages of development. Anglers fishing below Fontenelle Dam after November 7 unintentionally trample salmon nests (called redds) and kill the eggs within the redd. This is a bad situation by itself, but especially troublesome with the low numbers of kokanee currently inhabiting Flaming Gorge Reservoir. In order to enhance the kokanee fishery in Flaming Gorge Reservoir we need to protect all sources of kokanee recruitment including the fry produced by the late run kokanee below Fontenelle Reservoir.



Loose Ends



- Look for the 2005 Green River Region fishing forecast in the May-June issue of Wyoming Wildlife News.
- Wyoming free fishing day is June 4, 2005.
- Families and young anglers can look forward to fishing the urban ponds in our local communities this spring. These ponds will be stocked with catchable trout beginning in late April and stocking will continue through the end of June.
- June 19 is the annual kids fishing day at the Rock Springs County Fair Grounds. This popular event is sponsored by Trout Unlimited, Seedskaadee National Wildlife Refuge, Wal-Mart, and Wyoming Game and Fish Department.
- June 19 is also the annual kids fishing day in Evanston sponsored by the local Lyon's Club.
- The 7th annual Wyoming Hunting and Fishing Heritage Expo will be held September 9-11, 2005 at the Casper Events Center. The Expo is a great event to take youngsters to and educate them about the value and diversity of Wyoming's wildlife resources. For more information about the Expo, visit the Game and Fish's website at <http://gf.state.wy.us>, or call 1-888-EXPO-WYO.
- Anglers should look for the 2005 Walk-in Area Fishing Atlas. The 42-page guide features fishing areas enrolled in the Game and Fish's Private Lands/Public Wildlife Access Program.

Visit us on the internet!
HTTP://GF.STATE.WY.US/

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Green River Fisheries Supervisor Robb Keith fishing with his granddaughter Piper during kids fishing day in Rock Springs.